

ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S mystery magazine

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FRAGRANT

WILLY leaned over the counter. "He just put up his hands."

"Just that?"

Willy nodded. "Sure. Madigan put up his hands and he lived. Harsh went for his gun and he died. It was that simple."

Outside Willy's Cafe, the patrolman tried to keep the crowd moving. I watched the curious ones pass, some almost on tiptoe, trying to see where Harsh still lay sprawled over the table in the booth.

"It's funny," Willy said.

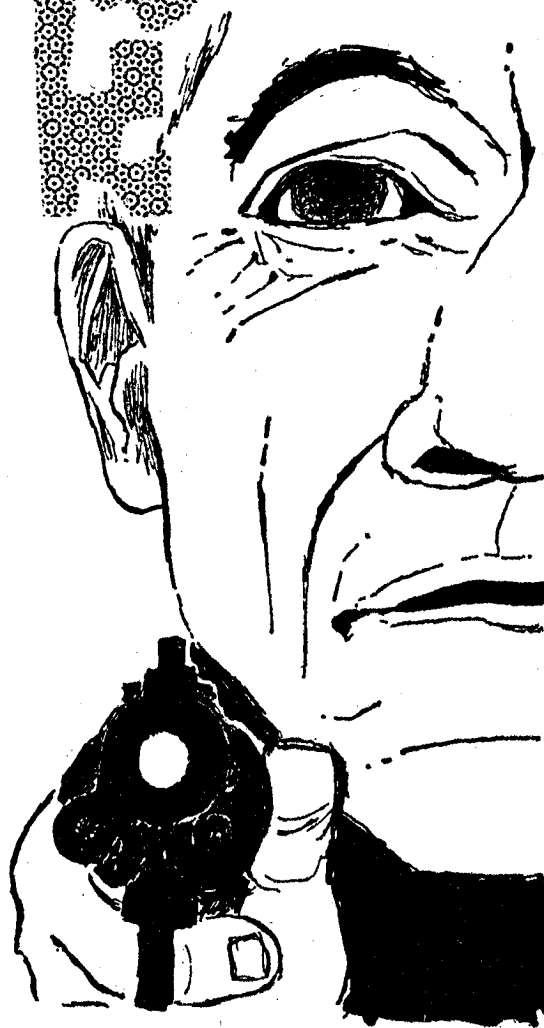
"What is?"

"You don't expect it from a cop. To give up so fast and easy."

"If you were looking into the muzzle of a .38, what brave thing would you do?"

He glanced at the two men in white waiting with their wicker basket and shrugged. "I guess I'd play it safe. Like Madigan."

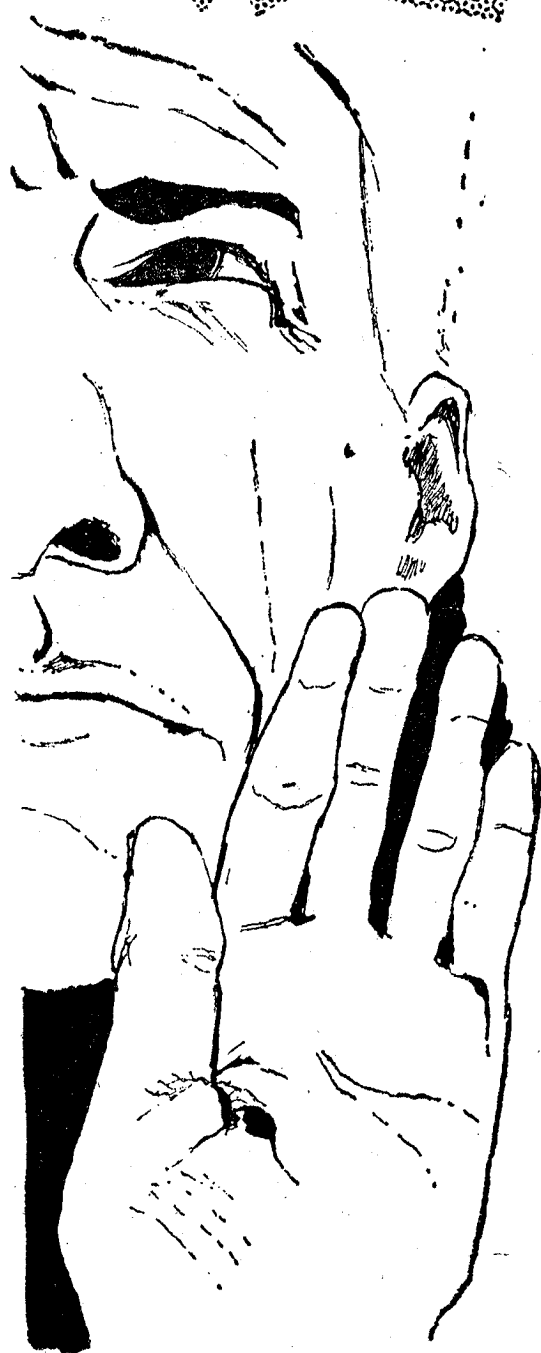
I checked my notebook. "It happened around seven-thirty? There were three customers on the stools,



I have been informed that there is no better exercise than wandering the labyrinthian ways of a murder puzzle. Officers are invariable led here and then there and then probably even farther afield. This explains how a policeman came to be called a "flatfoot."

PUZZLE

BY JACK RITCHIE



you behind the counter, and Madigan and Harsh in one of the booths?"

"That's it."

"You knew they were detectives?"

"They never kept it a secret. Been coming here for years. Sure, I knew they were cops." He blinked cigarette smoke out of one eye. "Like I said, it was around seven-thirty when these two young punks came in. I get the feeling right away that something's going to happen."

"You're psychic?"

"I been robbed a couple times before. Thirty, forty bucks. Not much, but it keeps me nervous."

"What about Harsh and Madigan? Did they get the feeling too?"

"I looked over there right away. They were watching the punks." Willy scratched his head. "Then Madigan went back to eating, I guess."

"You guess?"

That irritated him. "Madigan went back to eating. You want me to swear to that in court?"

The camera men shot their last pictures and began packing up. I walked over to the booth and joined Dave Foster, my partner.

He watched the ambulance attendants put Harsh's body in the basket. "I sent Madigan on to headquarters," he said. "He looked pretty shook up."

I nodded and leaned over Harsh slightly. There was the strong scent of perfume on him.

"Madigan's got three citations in his record," Foster said. "I just thought I'd mention it in case you were thinking anything about him."

"Did you know Harsh?" I asked.

"Just to speak to. He was the quiet type. Hardly ever said a word."

I went back to the counter.

Willy sighed. "I'm getting hoarse, from all this talking."

"You won't die from it."

He dragged on his cigarette. "These two kids came in and looked the place over. Then the dark-haired one jerked out his gun and started shooting."

"He didn't say anything? Like 'This is a stick-up?'"

"Maybe he was going to. I don't know."

"Did Harsh fire too?"

"He didn't get the chance. He got his gun out, but he didn't find the time to swing it around. The slugs cut him down before he could do anything."

And now we were back to Madigan again. "What did Madigan do?"

Willy took a tired breath. "Nothing. He put up his hands fast."

"This other kid," I said. "Did he fire his gun?"

"No. He looked surprised at what happened."

"And then?"

"They just stood there for a few seconds. I thought that Madigan might be finished off too, but then one of the kids yelled, 'Let's get out of here!' They ran out the door."

"Madigan followed them?"

"He stood there, stunned like, looking at Harsh, and then he went after them. But it was too late. They got away."

"Did they take anything? Money?"

"Not a cent." He watched the ambulance pull away from the curb outside. "I wonder if things would have been different if Madigan and Harsh both drew their guns at the same time."

The phone behind him rang and he picked the receiver off the wall hook. He listened a moment and then turned. "It's for you."

I went behind the counter and took the call. When I hung up, I talked to Foster. "I think we got them. One dead and one alive. They went through a red light on the west side. When a squad tried to flag them down, they got panicky and started shooting. This time they picked the wrong men."

Foster and I drove back to central police headquarters and parked our car.

Lieutenant Werth met us on the sixth floor and handed us a folder.

"It wasn't hard to make the kid," he said. "James Charles Beacon. Nineteen years old and he's got a local record stretching back to the time when he was twelve."

"Has he been identified?"

Werth nodded. "Madigan took a look at him. Beacon's the one who killed Harsh."

"Does he admit it?"

"He just admits he was there. He claims his buddy did the shooting, but he's dead and can't deny things."

"What was his name?"

"His wallet said Steve Torson. He was seventeen."

Foster and I paged through Beacon's file and then went down the corridor to the interrogation room.

Beacon was about medium in height and weight and he sat on a bench under the eye of a uniformed policeman.

I took a chair facing him. "All right. Tell us what happened."

He was going to give us the big lie. We knew that. But we would listen anyway.

Beacon ran his fingers through his hair. "It was all Steve's fault. He came to me and said he had this place all lined up. Willy's. He said it would be a easy touch and we'd get around a hundred."

"And you always did what Steve told you to do? He was seventeen and you're nineteen."

He looked at the floor and shrugged. "Steve was sort of a leader type."

It was probably the other way around, I thought. Steve was the poor pigeon who did the following.

Beacon went on. "Steve said he had two .38's. We'd go into Willy's, order a couple of coffees while we looked the place over and then we'd take it."

"And if anybody got in the way you'd blast them?"

He was quick to deny that. "We just wanted the money. I told Steve no shooting."

Foster crossed his legs. "Then why carry loaded guns?"

Beacon was in a corner and it took him half a minute to come up with an answer. "We weren't going to do any shooting, but we figured that if the guns were loaded, we'd have more confidence. That's it. If we carried empty guns, the way we'd act might give us away."

Foster grinned slightly, but said nothing.

"Why didn't you order it?" I asked.

Beacon looked perplexed. "Order what?"

"The coffee."

He shrugged. "We didn't have time. Steve started shooting right away."

"And you too?"

He shook his head. "I didn't fire a shot."

There were five witnesses who could call him a liar, but I let that go for the time being. "Our paraffin tests will show that you fired a gun."

He must have been thinking about the powder grains he couldn't wash off his hands because the answer came without any trouble. "I fired a gun later. When the squad was chasing us. But nobody got himself killed then."

"Why would Steve start shooting?" I asked.

"I don't know. He got panicky, I guess."

"The customers on the stools were nearer," Foster said. "Why didn't he work out his panic on them? Why pick on Harsh?"

Beacon couldn't answer that one.

"Did you know that the man killed was a cop?" I asked.

He looked at the floor. "That's what they say he was."

"Did Steve know they were cops? Is that why he started shooting?"

Beacon thought it over and then nodded. "That's what must have happened."

"How did he know? They weren't wearing uniforms?"

There was faint sweat on Beacon's forehead. "Maybe he recognized Harsh and knew he was a cop."

I tasted the smoke of my cigarette for awhile. "Let's start from the beginning."

Beacon rubbed his hands on his trouser legs. "When we walked in the place, these two guys in the booth looked us over like they knew what we were going to do."

"Both of them?"

"Yes."

"And then?"

Beacon thought about it and he must have decided that the next words couldn't hurt him. "They looked us over and then Harsh kicked the other one on the shins. Like a signal."

Foster and I looked at each other for a second.

"What happened?" I asked.

Beacon seemed puzzled. "This other one went right back to eating."

"Did you have your guns out when that happened?"

"No. But then . . . Steve lost his head when he saw that signal and pulled out his gun."

I looked out of the window for a moment. "Why didn't Steve shoot Madigan too?"

Beacon licked his lips. "It's hard to shoot somebody when he's got his hands in the air and not asking for trouble."

Foster and I left the room and walked down the corridor toward Lt. Werth's room.

Foster was uneasy. "You think he told the truth about the signal?"

"Why should he lie about that?"

Foster scratched his head. "Do we tell Werth about it?"

"Let it ride for awhile."

Werth was waiting for us. "How did it go?"

"The usual way," Foster said. "Blames it all on his partner. But if you just keep asking questions, he stumbles all over himself."

Werth tilted back in his chair. "I

sent for the witnesses and Willy. That ought to sew everything up."

"Is Madigan still here?" I asked.

"In the other room. He's waiting for his statement to be typed."

Madigan looked up when the three of us walked into the room.

He was a tall, heavy-shouldered man with gray eyes that moved slow and stayed on us.

"You know Foster and Regan?" Werth asked.

Madigan nodded.

"They're on the case," Werth said. "They'd like to talk to you."

Madigan waited until Werth left us alone and then spoke tiredly. "Ask your questions."

Foster offered him a cigarette. "Just tell us what happened."

Madigan used his lighter. "At around seven-fifteen," he said,

"Harsh and I dropped into Willy's place for something to eat. These two young punks came in about two or three minutes after we got our food and took it to one of the booths."

I watched him. "Did you see the two kids come in?"

"Yes."

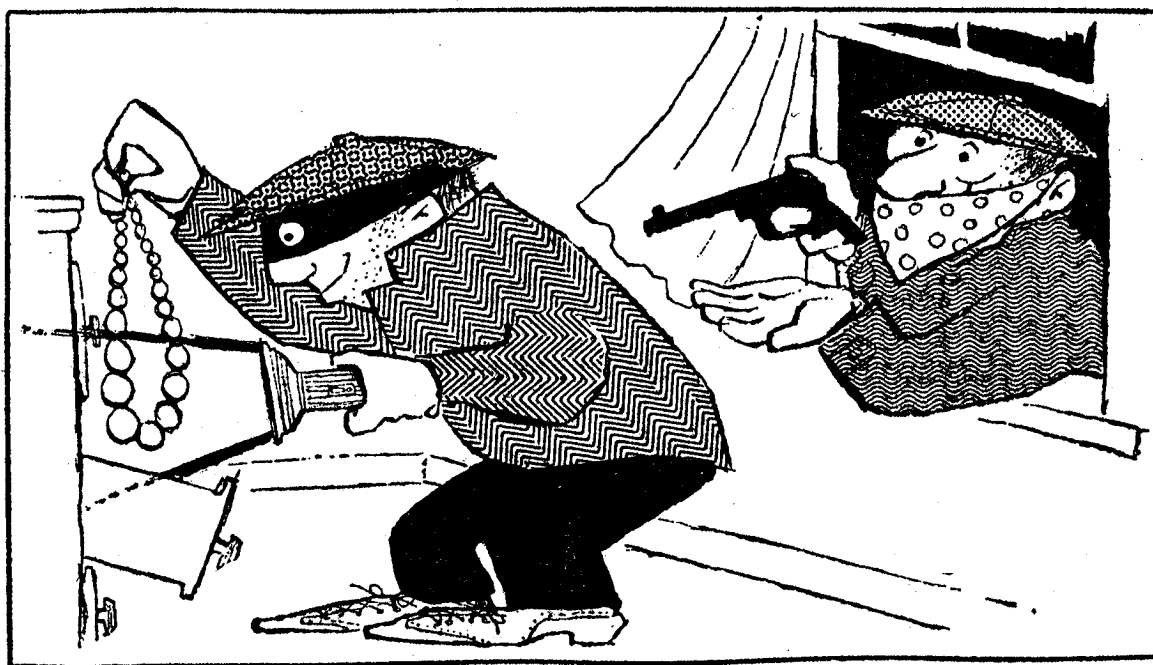
"You and Harsh looked them over?"

"That's right."

"And then?"

Madigan hesitated a slight second. "They looked just like average teenagers to me. I went on with my meal." He took a deep breath. "I never knew anything was wrong until Harsh got to his feet and went for his gun."

Foster and I waited out the fifteen seconds of silence.



Madigan's eyes flicked over us. "It all happened fast and I was staring into the barrel of a .38 before I knew it. There wasn't anything I could do."

"You put up your hands?"

Madigan's voice was edged. "What did you expect me to do?"

I made it sound casual. "I understand you've got three citations in your record."

His mouth tightened. "I was younger then and I had nobody dead and bloody next to me to remind me of just what could happen."

I absently moved the ashtray back and forth. "I understand that you and Harsh were partners for a long time. Seven years?"

Anger flashed in his eyes. "Should I cry? Would that make you happy?"

"Take it easy," Foster said softly and I wondered if he meant the words for me.

I glanced at the plain wedding ring on Madigan's finger. "Did Harsh leave anybody? Wife? Kids?"

"No. He was a bachelor. He claimed he liked it that way. It gave him more of a chance . . . more independence."

"More of a chance for what?" I asked.

"I haven't any idea."

I nodded to Foster and we both started to leave. At the door I turned. "Why did Harsh kick you in the shins?"

Madigan's eyes narrowed. "Who told you anything like that?"

"The kid who killed Harsh."

"He's a liar," Madigan snapped.

In the corridor, Foster shook his head. "I don't like the way this is turning out. What now?"

"We get Madigan's address from the files."

Foster raised an eyebrow. "You got anything in mind?"

"I was thinking of perfume."

It took us about twenty minutes to find Madigan's apartment building on St. Paul Avenue. We stopped at the rows of mail slots to check on the apartment number.

A little man in shirt sleeves stood in the doorway of the small public lounge off to the left. "Looking for anybody in particular?"

"We found them." I looked him over. "Who are you?"

"Andrews. The building superintendent."

"How long have the Madigans been living here?" Foster asked.

"About five years." Andrews' lips moved in a private smile. "You a friend of Madigan? Or Mrs. Madigan?"

Foster's face was expressionless. "We never met Mrs. Madigan."

Andrews grinned slyly. "You'll find that Lilis—that's Mrs. Madigan—is very friendly. She likes people."

Foster and I went to the elevator. He pushed the button for the sixth floor.

Lilis Madigan had sea-green

eyes and her smile was polite. Just that. Nothing more.

"Yes?" she asked.

We took off our hats and I showed her the badge in my wallet. "Could we speak to you for a few moments please?"

Worry came into her eyes. "Is there something wrong? Has anything happened to my husband?"

"No. He's all right. May we come in?"

She stepped aside and I caught the scent of her perfume as we passed her and entered the room. I noticed that she left the door to the corridor open.

She waited until we were seated. "But there is something wrong?"

I nodded and told her what had happened earlier in the evening. Almost all of it.

Her face was pale when I finished. "I'd better see my husband."

"No," I said. "He'll be home in a little while." I glanced at the tastefully furnished room. "Your husband and Harsh were good friends?"

"Yes. Almost like brothers."

"Did Harsh come here often?"

She nodded. "For dinner and the evening."

My eyes came back to the raven-black hair. "Did you ever invite him here yourself?"

She stared at me. "Why do you ask a question like that?"

I didn't answer that. "How did Harsh look when you saw him this afternoon? Tense? Nervous?"

"No. Not at all." She frowned. "How did you know he was here?"

I went on. "What time was he here?"

She hesitated. "Do these questions have anything to do with what happened tonight?"

Foster made his smile friendly. "We don't know."

Lilis studied me before she answered my question. "Harsh came here at about three-thirty."

"To see you?"

A trace of anger came into her eyes. "He always came here at about that time to pick up my husband. They both go on duty at four."

"Was your husband here yesterday?"

"No. He'd gone out to do some shopping. He told me to phone Harsh and tell him he'd meet him at headquarters."

"Did you phone Harsh?"

"Yes."

"But he came anyway?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

Her eyes met mine. "He wanted my opinion on the ring."

I frowned. "What ring?"

"The engagement ring. He bought it earlier yesterday and was going to give it to a girl in this building."

Foster and I looked at each other and he shrugged.

"Pauline Winters," she said. "Harsh met her in the elevator about three months ago and he'd

been seeing her quite often since."

I rubbed my temple. "Did Madigan . . . your husband know about this?"

"I doubt if anyone knew about it. The first time I ever heard of Pauline was this afternoon and I've never even met her. Harsh kept things to himself. Perhaps he was just shy about mentioning it to anyone."

Foster took over for a few seconds. "He showed you the ring and left?"

"Not quite. He also wanted the name of the perfume I've been using lately. It was a gift from my husband and Harsh wanted to get a vial just like it for Pauline Winters."

I leaned forward. "And you gave him the name?"

She shook her head. "No. I'd emptied the vial into another container and I'd forgotten the brand name. But I put some on his breast pocket handkerchief. Harsh said that that would be enough so that he could trace it."

I smiled to myself slightly. "Thank you, Mrs. Madigan."

Downstairs, the little man was still in the lounge.

I showed him my badge. "Do you know a man named Harsh?"

His smile was wise. "I know him by sight. He's Madigan's partner, isn't he?"

I nodded. "Did he come to this building often?"

Andrews showed small teeth. "That's right."

I watched the pink-veined eyes. "Sometimes when you knew Madigan wasn't here?"

His tongue moistened his lips. "Sometimes."

"Did you ever follow him upstairs?"

He seemed to smirk. "No. But I can add two and two."

"Charming," I said. "And you felt it was your public duty to let Madigan know what was happening?"

The sound I gave my words made him cautious.

"I might have mentioned it. I don't remember."

In the car, Foster exhaled tiredly. "Do we lay all the bits and pieces we have in Werth's lap?"

I was about to pull away from the curb, but I changed my mind. I switched off the ignition. "We'll talk to Madigan first. He ought to be home pretty soon."

We waited in the car for twenty minutes before Madigan's car pulled into the parking lot next to the apartment building.

Foster and I met him as he walked out of the lot.

"We'd like to talk to you," I said.

He flipped a cigarette butt into the street. "You want the story again?"

"No," I said. "This time we tell you a few things."

His eyes flicked to Foster and then back to me. "Go ahead."

"It all starts earlier this afternoon," I said. "Harsh went to your

wife and said, 'Mrs. Madigan, I like that perfume you're wearing. Could you give me a sample of it? On my handkerchief will be all right. I'd like to find out what it is and buy some.' I paused. "For Pauline Winters.'"

Madigan's face was expressionless. "Who's Pauline Winters?"

"She lives in your apartment building. Harsh met her three months ago and he's been seeing a lot of her since. He even went to her apartment a lot of times."

I smiled slightly. "But yesterday he did go to your wife's apartment. He wanted to show her an engagement ring he'd just bought for Pauline."

Madigan said nothing.

"Too much talk gets people into trouble," I said. "But in Harsh's case it was different. He kept his own business to himself and that got him killed. Maybe he wasn't sure that Pauline would accept the ring and he didn't want any kidding. From you or anybody else. But the point is, he never talked about Pauline to anybody. Not even with his best friend, his buddy, his partner."

Madigan's face was in the shadows now and he seemed to be watching the traffic.

"The two punks came into Willy's at about seven-thirty," I said. "Both you and Harsh looked up and saw them. Maybe Harsh just had the feeling that something was going to happen. He was a cop. Like you're supposed to be, Madi-

gan. Or maybe he recognized Beacon and expected trouble. He kicked you under the table. It was the signal to watch—to be ready."

I shook my head. "But what did you do? You remembered the lying words of a sly little janitor. And then there was the perfume on Harsh. Yes. There was your final, concrete evidence. It proved to you, Madigan, that your best friend and your wife . . ."

I stopped there for a few seconds. "And so you let Harsh stand up alone and die."

I spoke almost in a whisper. "They tell me you were like brothers. You and Harsh. I don't know how you're going to live with that, Madigan. I don't know what kind of a man you are."

Madigan turned his head. "Have you said everything you wanted to?"

"That's it, Madigan," I said.

He studied me for a few seconds and then turned on his heel and entered the building.

Foster watched him go up the three steps of the foyer to the elevator. "It took me thirty years to make Detective Sergeant," Foster said. "You did it in half the time, Regan."

"It was the breaks," I said.

"But you don't really believe that, do you?"

I glanced at him sharply, but he was still staring at the apartment building entrance.

"Should we tell your story to

Lieutenant Werth?" he asked softly.

I shrugged. "What would be the use? We can't prove anything."

Foster seemed to be smiling. "Do you think Madigan will resign from the force?"

I didn't think so. But I said, "I don't know. His conscience takes over from here."

Foster really was smiling. "Or maybe he'll do something foolhardy and brave and get himself killed. And everybody will say, 'Why, it was almost as though he wanted to die.'"

I flushed a little, but said nothing.

"And so you think it was the perfume on the handkerchief that did it? The final nail that convinced Madigan that there was something between Harsh and Lilis Madigan?"

I was irritated. "It all fits."

"And Harsh was the quiet type. So quiet he never did tell Madigan about this Pauline?"

"That's it," I snapped. "Simple logic."

Foster still smiled. "Then also consider this simple logic too. Not one man in a hundred can tell the difference between one perfume and another. Do you think Madigan is this one exception?"

I said nothing.

"And a little further logic," Foster said. "Harsh might have been the quiet type, but after he once got around to telling his best friend's wife about Pauline, don't you think

he'd tell his best friend? And probably the same day?"

Foster touched my arm. "Don't brood, Regan. We'll have another talk with the superintendent of this building."

I felt tired. "You don't think Madigan let Harsh be killed?"

Foster was thoughtful. "I have a cop's suspicion that he did. But it will take some proving."

When the superintendent opened the door of his apartment, he was dressed in pajamas and a robe.

He looked at me uneasily.

Foster stepped slightly in front of me. "A little while ago you said that you put two and two together."

The little man nodded reluctantly.

"You were probably wrong that time," Foster said. "But you can't always be wrong. Now tell us about Madigan. Did you ever put two and two together about him?"

Andrews swallowed. "I don't want to get into trouble."

Foster's voice was almost gentle. "And you won't. Believe me. Just tell us."

The superintendent pulled the robe sash a little tighter. "Madigan's apartment is on the sixth floor. But when he comes in, I watch the elevator lights. A lot of times he goes only to the third floor."

Foster nodded and walked to the banks of mail slots in the foyer.

"What are you looking for?" I asked.

He put his finger on a card.
"Pauline Winters. Apartment 317.
That's the third floor." Foster
smiled. "I once read that a man
can be more jealous about a girl

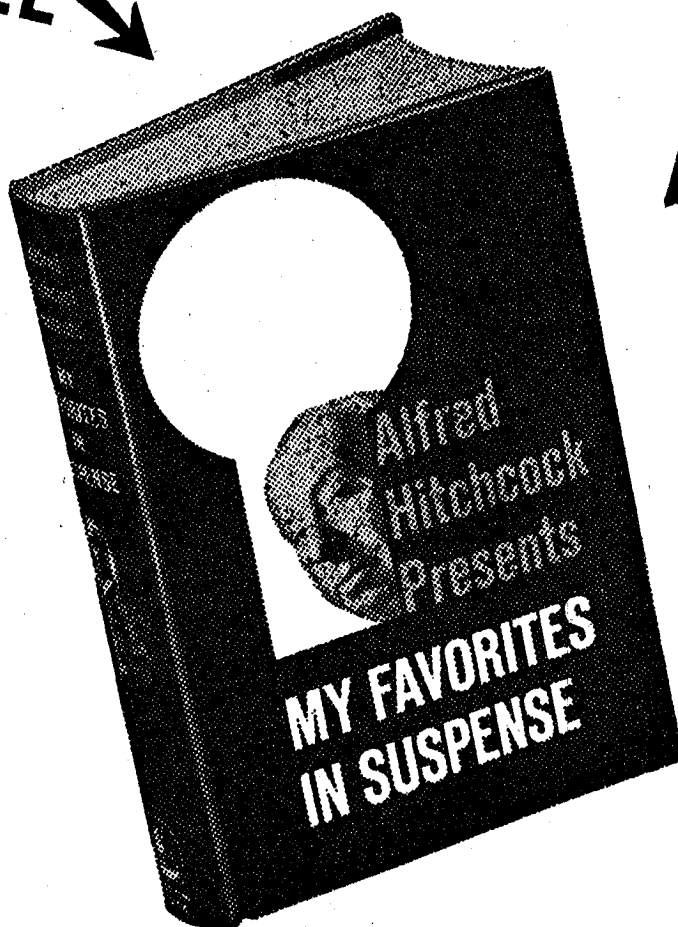
friend than a wife. Should we find
out?"

This time I let Foster do all the
talking.

I just listened and learned.

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Please turn to page 10 for details